BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Education Report

Throne Speech Includes Vision for Education

This year's Throne Speech highlights significant new steps government will take to help move British Columbia closer towards becoming the best educated, most literate jurisdiction in North America.

While school completion rates are at a record-high 79 per cent, they have not improved in four years. That's why government will be introducing a variety education reforms to lift our students to even higher levels of achievement.

Improving Achievement

Amendments will be introduced to the School Act to broaden the Education Minister's capacity to create provincial demonstration schools, and offer more choice in learning.

Up to 80 StrongStart Centres will open in underutilized school spaces over the next year. They will help our youngest students to enter school ready to learn.

School boards will develop district literacy action plans to help people of all ages in their community improve their reading skills.

Schools boards will be renamed "boards of education" to reflect their broader mandate in the areas of early learning and literacy.

Recognition and Support for Teachers

Teachers do a phenomenal job and are vital to the success of B.C.'s students. A Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence will be established to annually recognize and reward excellence in teaching. This new award will give recognition and incentives to reward improvements in student achievement and promote professional development.

Teachers and principals are proving that strong leadership is central to success. That's why, through the BC Leadership Council, we will be offering enhanced leadership opportunities for training and certification of teachers and principals.

We will also be providing teachers with online support, tools and professional development through initiatives like the Key Concepts. Key Concepts is an overview of the big ideas in Mathematics and English Language Arts K-12 and how they develop over time in the curriculum.

Changes to School Fees

Government believes that school boards should provide programs leading to graduation free of charge. Many boards, parents and students expressed concern that some programs might not be able to continue without fees.

We will be moving forward with legislation that will permit boards of education to offer specialty academies. These academies will require consultation with parents and the approval of school planning councils.

After consultation with parents and school planning councils, boards will be authorized to charge fees to defray non-instructional costs or additional costs incurred in offering special academies, trades programs and in providing band instruments.

Boards will be required to have a policy accommodating students who may have difficulty paying fees.

Student Health and Safety

One in four B.C. children is overweight or obese. The Province will work with boards, industry and vending machine companies to expedite the removal of junk food from schools.

New legislation will ban all forms of tobacco in any buildings used by schools or boards, in vehicles leased or owned by boards, and on school grounds—that includes both public and independent schools.

Anti-bullying legislation will require boards establish codes of conduct that meet the provincial standards set out in the Safe Schools Strategy.

Government will also establish a teacher discipline registry for the public. The BC College of Teachers will be required to report the names of teachers disciplined for misconduct involving emotional, physical or sexual abuse. The college will also be required to create an employment registry, which will be made available to employers, including school boards, authorities and bands.

Tuesday, the Speech from the Throne proposed many exciting changes to our education system that I know will promote even greater student achievement. This special edition of the Education Report is my way of making sure you see that information firsthand. Want more? Follow this link to the Throne Speech. I look forward to our continued work in creating the optimum environment to allow for our children's life success.

Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education

Additional Highlights

Other new steps to boost student achievement by improving quality, choice and accountability in British Columbia's education system include:

- Four new "superintendents of achievement" will help school boards establish achievement goals based on the provincial performance measures.
- The role of district superintendents will expand to be responsible to boards for improving student achievement.
- New "sunshine legislation" will shed light on school district companies' best practices, and new public reporting and auditing requirements, as well as new obligations for their directors to be arm's length from parent boards, will be established.
- A pledge to use underutilized school spaces as public spaces to deliver on public priorities.
- Government will also work with boards to better manage capital planning across all school districts.

Further initiatives will reflect the government's 2005 election commitments to:

- Require annual public reports for all public schools on the statistics relating to teacher hirings, terminations, disciplinary actions and professional development.
- Give government the ability to directly communicate with all teachers.